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REGIONAL POLITICS OF NORTH KARNATAKA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:
India is a country with a semi-federal system and it has states as its territorial units. The regional imbalances in these regional units such as the states continue to reverberate in Indian politics at one point or another. The struggle for the identity of North Karnataka, especially in Karnataka, has been going on for a long time. The report of the Karnataka Regional Imbalance Committee headed by Prof. D.M Nanjundappa identified most of the regions of North Karnataka as backward regions and has recommended toachieve the development of these areas through necessary initiatives. Though there are different dimensions to understand the reason for the backward condition of North Karnataka like it is still deprived of a privileged status. The flaws in the philosophy of the measures taken by government for the development of North Karnataka or moreover the colonial consciousness behind these development projects also comes to the fore as to whether the foundations have been laid to point out the actual problems of North Karnataka and the necessary solution to them. As mentioned above, through the issue could be dealt from perspectives. My article would be focusing on how region is being used in the construction of identity and an active participation in politics.

Keywords: *North Karnataka, Regional Imbalance, Development, Identity Politics, Separate State.*

INTRODUCTION

Regionalism is the ideology of believing in the territorial ideology of the people of the particular region and which they represent it as their identity. "In India, socio-political scholars tend to address the concept of identity in terms of caste, religion, tribe, language and community"[1]. Regional politics in India can be traced back on the colonial policy of divide and rule. The regional politics of

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[1]Shipa N. (2021) Identity politics in India -its various dimensions. *IJCRIT and social science,* vol-11

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North Karnataka is no exception. There are narratives that regionalism often promotes vote bank politics. In North Karnataka, it will be seen that the people and the regional system will be exposed to negative thinking by making the vote bank as their capital. The regional politics of North Karnataka is based on the regional limitations and is a platform for the interests of the people in masses to achieve development. There are many types of identity claims can be seen in regional politics. Mainly based on "language, culture, region, race and tradition the regionalism comes to the fore"[2]. Based on these factors the Identity politics will be seen in North Karnataka. Today regionalism has become identity, political parties and elites have made regionalism their agenda and it becomes the major dominant ideology which influencing the Indian politics.

REGIONAL POLITICS

Regional politics is a political ideology focused on a specific region and group of regions interests. A region is a socio-political system with various groups associated with it. Regional politics mainly becomes identeity politics and expresses the demands, special privileges and self-governance of the people of that region. This identity is sometimes fostered and directed by the government itself. The assertion of regionalism can be identified as a combination of social and political identities to assert an identity. It is an important factor that determines and affects Indian politics. Regional politics is an important factor influencing the politics of the entire country as the governance of a particular region significantly affects its policies and development. The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences describes it as expression. After the era of coalition politics started we see the role of regional politics along with the role of regional parties in national politics. It mainly helps to provide good governance at the regional level. Political parties have a strong regional identity and are dedicated to the development of the state in their region. For example, the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal are examples of parties that embody regionalism. Payal Byas says that "Indian party system is a mixture of Western and modern authoritarian governments and reflects some of the ancient heritage and institutions."

IDENTITY POLITICS OF NORTH KARNATAKA

The web of identity politics flows from the bottom to the top of all political systems as people arbitrarily try to identify themselves in all states. North Karnataka is not an exception to this. People try to represent themselves linguistically, ethnically, regionally and culturally in terms of development. The regionalism of North Karnataka's identity has also escalated in Karnataka, which

[2] BYJUS. (2023, June 26). Regionalism - An Overview. https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/regionalism/

hinders the hope of an integral Karnataka. Even though the government has formulated comprehensive developmental policy, we can see the roots of some separate identities in Karnataka based on some step-motherly cries. Especially on the basis of the stand that the development is stunted, the cry of North Karnataka comes to the front and it demands development policies from the government. Is the development of North Karnataka not possible? That is the big question. My article will focus on what is the cause of this cry for identity, if there is any development. Based on the ideas of dissatisfaction with the regional imbalance, the majority of North Karnataka has taken up the weapon of identity politics to identify themselves. In particular, the policy of achieving the development of language, race, and region through political, social, and economic recognition has become a hot spot for the development of regionalism in India. In accordance with the interest of the region, some political leaders have formed political parties as a sign of regional identity, For example, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Lok Tantric Congress, Assam Jatiya Parishad, Akali Dal and many other regional parties can be found. Even in Karnataka some major regional parties like All India Hindustan Congress Party, badavar raitar Congress, Bangalore Nava Nirman Party, Janata Dal [Secular], Kannada Nadu Party, Kalyan Rajya Pragati Paksha, Uttam Prajakiya Party"[3] etc. these Regional parties in Karnataka are based on identity politics. .

Identity politics identifies many different movements and ideologies in society. It is thereby strongly rooted that 'Identity'[4] is important and helps in bringing elements of equal society to those who are deprived of social norms. It is an important fact that some powerful political leaders are using the dice of language and caste factors to find the existence of politics in North Karnataka. So the question arises whether North Karnataka needs secession. If yes then what is the story of Akhand Karnataka? That again comes before us as a question. Strong leaders from North Karnataka are already holding the political helm. Some others have also exercised power as Chief Ministers of the state. Also some regional parties are part of the leadership of the organization. Regional identity is an important way for all of them. And they hold their positions based on one aspect of identity.it is true that some have caste-based identity, while others have identified themselves on the basis of their regionalism. The government of Karnataka has been implementing many

[3] www.etvbharath.com/kannada/karanataka/state/bengaluru-urban/periodof-governmentby-regionalpartiesinthestateand-whoarethechiefministers-dot

[4]. Bamba Ceesay. (2021, April 24). *Identity politics : marginalized people's last resort to redemption.*

developmental policies, but the development of Karnataka is a mirage if the policies of the government are intact. There is a cry that it has created a regional imbalance, Studies so far provide explanations that this regional imbalance led to the emergence of identity politics in North Karnataka.

NORTH KARNATAKA'S VOICE FOR A SEPARATE STATE AND GOVERNMENT MOVE

The state of Karnataka, which has been ruled by various traditions since the past, has developed its own existence free from it and has crossed many decades. Karnataka is a land that has seen stability in social, administrative, economic, political and cultural aspects. Evens, some provinces of the state of Karnataka are now raising the cry of secession in the name of imbalanced development. It is also true that the state of Karnataka has taken up the weapon of separatism against the government from the day of its existence to till now. So, on the basis of which the people of North Karnataka are raising the cry of each state. The factors that can be heard from its background are the underdevelopment separate regional imbalance and the policies implemented by the government to support all the districts except the districts of North Karnataka. The philosophy behind this is that if we get the status of a separate state, we can find effective solutions to our real problems through our own leaders. Many committees formed and gave reports to provide a solution to the cry of separatism. Based on those reports, the government will formulate policies and strive for the economic, political and social development of North Karnataka, this was thought of the scholars, political thought of this is what scholars pol-leaders and the government. All kinds of development projects implemented by different governments of Karnataka have been rejected in relation to the whole of Karnataka including North Karnataka. The cry of the people of North Karnataka is that the development of North Karnataka is just a mirage. Due to this view, they are trying to identify themselves with the issue of regionalism. In this base ground government appointed D.M Nanjundappa to prepare report on redresses of regional imbalance"[5]. It is the voice of the people of North Karnataka that the government has not made a serious and sincere effort to properly implement the recommendations of their report submitted to the government in 2002. It is the responsibility of governments to devise a lasting solution to the problem of inequality in development.

When it comes to the issue of development, the government's attitude towards North Karnataka in capital investment, leadership, growth of industries, agricultural development projects, availability of basic facilities, education, political participation and so on, the studies show that the government's

[5] Athani Basappa. (2022). *Uttar Karanatakada Abhivruddhiyalli Rajakiyada Patra Hagu Honegarike e*, Shorvil Publication.

stepmother attitude is affecting the development of North Karnataka. Due to all these issues, many political organizations and struggle committees are standing against the government, asserting their own identity for the development of language, caste, religion and race in North Karnataka. It is necessary to make an observation, Ever since the unification of Karnataka, the people who have held the helm of government for the longest time are from North Karnataka. This regionalism has contributed 6 Chief Ministers to the state of Karnataka with several Ministers, so it naturally raises questions as to whether the development of North Karnataka has lagged behind?.

Many provincial & territorial imbalances were reflected before the formation of the state of Karnataka. But when the concept of Akhanda Karnataka was put forward, despite many problematic steps, everyone agreed to the formation of Akhanda Karnataka. In the later days, the existence of many political parties and participation in the government started. Governments have worked for the development of an entire Karnataka in order to find a permanent solution to their problems, paying more attention to the resounding cries based on regional identities.

Between 1996 and 1998, the call for a separate state in North Karnataka gained traction due to perceived regional disparities within Karnataka. In response, the Government of Karnataka established the High Authority Committee on Regional Imbalances, chaired by Dr. DM Nanjundappa. Dr. Nanjundappa's committee pinpointed 175 economically disadvantaged taluks, primarily in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, industry, trade, finance, economic infrastructure, and demographic diversity zones. Nanjundappa's analysis, encompassing 35 indicators, recommended the formulation of proactive development strategies to rectify these imbalances, using an integrated development index as a yardstick. Notably, certain areas in South Karnataka were also recognized as backward alongside those identified in Nanjundappa's report. Despite Dr. Nanjundappa presenting the report to the government in 2002, its execution commenced in 2007-08. The committee's key proposal advocated an eight-year special development plan focused on uplifting the underprivileged regions of North Karnataka. Consequently, the Karnataka government, guided by Nanjundappa's findings, initiated measures to address regional imbalances. Belagavi emerged as the focal point of North Karnataka, leading to the construction of the Suvarna Soudha building to serve administrative purposes. It was inaugurated by President Pranab Mukherjee on 11-10-2012[6]. The concentration of state government activities in Belgaum serves as a significant platform for addressing local

[6] Athani Basappa. (2022). *Uttar Karanatakada Abhivruddhiyalli Rajakiyada Patra Hagu Honegarike*, Shorvil Publication. P.2.

concerns, demonstrating the government's commitment to North Karnataka's development. Efforts to designate Belgaum as the second capital of Karnataka underscore this commitment, with the establishment of the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha serving as a pivotal step. Sessions held within this facility highlight the government's pledge to address the region's challenges effectively.

Furthermore, the strategic relocation of key government departments from Bangalore to Belgaum aims to expedite the region's development trajectory. Initiatives such as the establishment of a State High Court mobile bench in Dharwad and Kalaburgi exemplify the government's endeavor to ensure swift legal recourse for citizens.

Today, a plethora of government departments, development authorities, human rights offices, and agriculture board offices are firmly established in North Karnataka, safeguarding the region's interests comprehensively. While the cultivation of a distinct regional identity has offered some resolution to longstanding imbalances, issues of underdevelopment persist and demand sustained attention.

LIMITATIONS OF REGIONAL POLITICS

When Karnataka was formed as a state, there were sharp regional imbalances but it appears that the governments of that time did not act to eliminate it.

- There are claims that the Regional Imbalance Redressal Authority Committee put forth multiple recommendations to rectify the disparities between South Karnataka and North Karnataka, yet struggled with their implementation.
- The government's slow progress in fulfilling the fundamental goals outlined in Dr. DM Nanjundappa's report serves as a significant catalyst for the calls for regional separation.
- On the one hand, the political leaders elected from North Karnataka are using regional identity as a tool for their power; on the other hand, the cry for separatism is escalating, recognizing that they have been deprived of some basic facilities for many years.
- There are some limitations in the policies & strategies implemented by the government for the development of North Karnataka which has made the development slow.
- In North Karnataka, there has been infrastructure development including railways, roads, highways, airports, universities, high courts, the Suvarna Soudha, Technical University, and government buildings. However, there are allegations from residents of North Karnataka that these developments do not adequately represent the overall progress of the region.

CONCLUSION

India's prolonged exposure to colonial rule has left a lasting imprint on its policies and procedures, imbuing them with a 'colonially conscious' essence. It is evident that government policies crafted under colonial influence carry a discernible colonial undertone. As a result, there is a growing call for a separate state, fueled by the perception that development policies, plans, and ideologies are imported from Western societies without due consideration for local models to address local issues. Consequently, these development strategies often fail to accurately address the challenges faced by regions like North Karnataka. In light of the persistent underdevelopment and regional disparities in North Karnataka, certain political elites seek to exploit these grievances, sometimes even with tacit support from the government, thus exacerbating identity politics and posing a challenge to the notion of a unified Karnataka. Against this backdrop, this article advocates for in-depth studies on underdevelopment, regional imbalances, and the dynamics of regional identity politics.

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